

Hi my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and this is the 8<sup>th</sup> principle minute. With the adoption of the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle, our congregation committed to dismantle racism, beginning within our walls.

Once again, this week we will set aside our ongoing exploration of the attributes of White Supremacy Culture and turn to the news. Guns have grabbed the headlines again. We are once again grieving the loss of children and two of their teachers who gave their lives to try to protect them and it had been just ten days since the massacre in Buffalo, New York.

When challenged to institute even the most basic gun control legislation; legislation that had proven effective but had been allowed to expire, those in thrall to the NRA and gun manufacturers have once again raised the issue of mental health.

While the mental health of people who commit these crimes can justifiably be questioned, is addressing mental health really the solution? Which demographic group has the least access to mental health treatment and which has the greatest access? Black women and white men, respectively. Which group is most likely to commit mass shootings and which is least likely? White men and black women, respectively.

Should we, as a society, put more money into healthcare, especially mental health care? Yes, absolutely. If we direct that aid where it's most needed, will it actually be directed towards those who commit these crimes of terror? No, it won't. If it is directed towards white males, we'll once again be short-changing the black women in need of additional mental health resources. Moreover, when those who are looking to avoid gun control are talking about mental health we must ask if they are looking to provide health care or to criminalize mental illness.

The epidemic of school shootings in the US is a problem of White Supremacy Culture. It's about an entitlement to power. It's about not just acceptance, but idolization of the use of force in conflict resolution. Until we change the basic value structures of this country we will continue to see mass shootings. We must establish sensible controls over gun ownership and use. We must also provide adequate healthcare for all.

Together we will continue this journey toward spiritual wholeness, build a beloved community, educate ourselves and discuss what it means to develop a culture of being accountably anti-racist. We will continue to look at our own practices, identity, and stories with a new lens to dismantle the racism in ourselves and our institutions.

